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PAKISTAN'S CIVIL WAR

WHAT HAS LONG BEEN FEARED for the world's largest, but deeply divided, Moslem nation has finally materialised in the outbreak of civil war in East Pakistan. With President YAHYA KHAN's departure from Dacca, the provincial capital, after abortive endeavours to resolve the constitutional impasse, large-scale fighting flared up yesterday between the West Pakistani army and the supporters of the Eastern province's undisputed political leader, Sheikh Mujibur RAHMAN. Separation is in the very fabric of the State of Pakistan. Not only are the Western and Eastern wings separated by 1,000 miles of Indian territory; they are just as much divided economically, socially and culturally. Although East Pakistan has 60 per cent. of the population and is the major producer, it is subservient to West Pakistan, which largely mans the central bureaucracy, the army and the business community.

The inequality extends to foreign aid and imports and this, for East Pakistan with its dense population and abysmally poor standard of living, has led to the formulation by Sheikh Mujib of demands for the control of its own taxation and foreign trade. High hopes were raised by national elections last December, when his regional Awami League won an absolute majority in the first freely-elected National Assembly in the country's short history, that East Pakistan would finally achieve its rightful place in the system of government and its people cease to be treated as second-class citizens. Hopes of an understanding receded as the Constituent Assembly, which was to draft a new constitution, failed to be convened. The Sheikh's dominance gave him *de facto* rule. The tragedy is that whatever the West Pakistani army may do, at whatever terrible cost, to restore order now it cannot create a stable and durable democratic system.